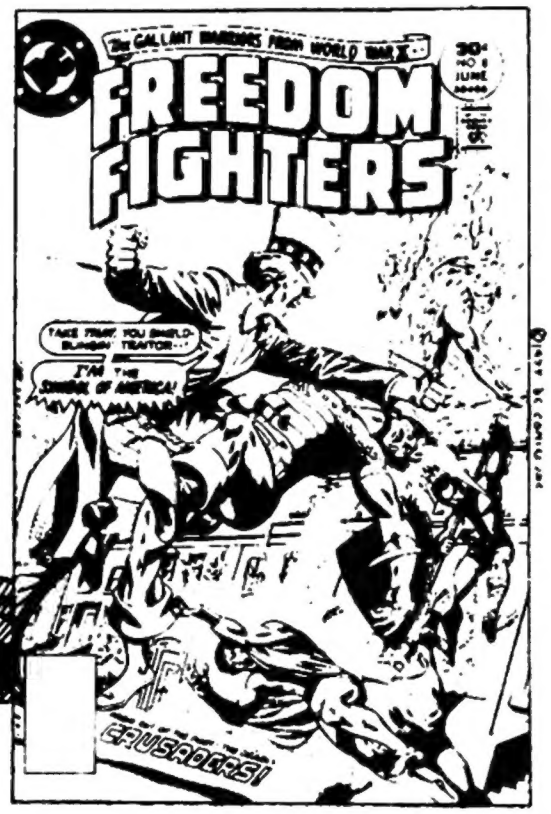
HOWARD THE DUCK INTERVIEWED!

COMICS NEWS BEMUSING MAGAZINE

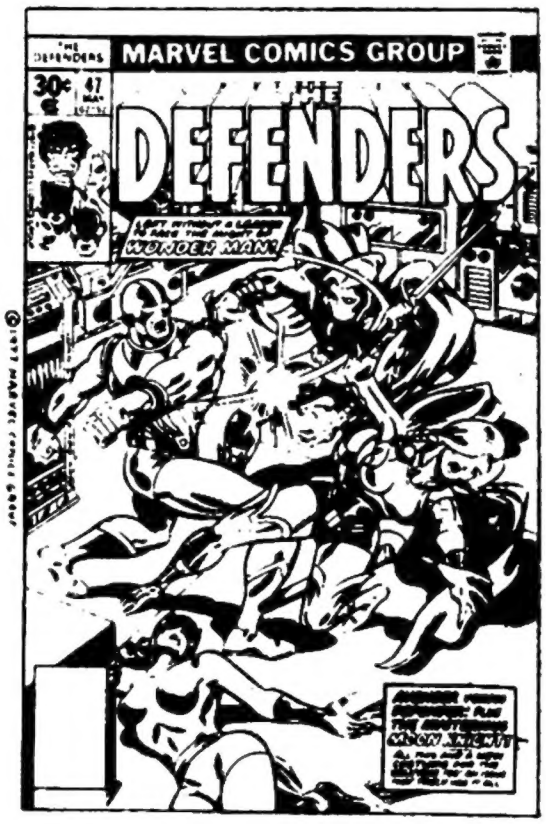
15p

FEBRUARY 12


THE GALLANT WARRIORS FROM WORLD WAR X...
FREEDOM FIGHTERS
TAKE THAT, YOU SHIELD-SLASHIN' TRAITOR...!
I'M THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA!
CA-USSSHHH!

©1977 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
POWER-PACKED ACTION WITH THE
BLACK PANTHER
CHAOS IN KING SOLOMON'S TOMB!
LURKING EVIL STALKS THE HAUNTED HALLS!



editor & publisher: Martin Lock

assistant editor: Nigel Edwards

BEMUSING MAGAZINE is published five times a year by the editor, Martin Lock,

--all submissions, correspondence and subscriptions should be sent to this address. Volume 1, number 12, February 1977. No part of any issue of this magazine may be reprinted, recorded, photocopied or xeroxed, microfilmed or microfiched, without the written permission of the publisher; copyright (c) 1977 by Martin Lock. By post, a 5-issue subscription costs £1.00 in the UK or Europe, or $2.00 in the USA, by sea mail. Single issues--20p or 50c. Comic-book cover reproductions and similar art are for review purposes, and are copyrighted by the respective publishers. Ad rates: £4.00 per full page, 22.0 x 28.8cm, including margins. All submissions should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope; we can assume no responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts or art, but we'll do our best. In shops etc Bemusing must be sold at its cover price, 15p, and no other; a dealer discount of 30% is available for a minimum of 20 copies, post free. This is an amateur, non profit-making magazine.

BEMUSINGS

Well, Bemusing returns, with, as promised, more pages--and, as I warned you, a higher price. I'm confident that you'll find a bigger Bem worth an extra 5p; this time, it's allowed us, on top of all the regular features, to fit in articles by Rich Morrissey and Nige Edwards (the Superswipe Revenge Squad worked well!), plus a couple of new regular columns. Moving into a flat in Worcester has taken up more of my spare time for the last few months than I'd expected, and has meant that I couldn't get this issue published as early as I'd hoped; however, as you may have noticed from a couple of recent newszines, there was rather a shortage of important news in January, so that delaying Bem by a month may have helped us avoid that. Who needs a newsless newszine, after all?

I would like to add more pages to Bemusing if possible; don't worry, this isn't a warning of another price-hike -- rather, it's a request for more subscriptions. Compared with the other main comics fanzines, Bem's sub list isn't very long --and that, since the number of copies the comics shops take is not too flexible, means that Bem's print run is lower than CMN or Panelologist. Now, another hundred copies printed and sold would bring the printing cost per copy down enough for me to add another four pages -- and that means a lot of extra subscriptions!

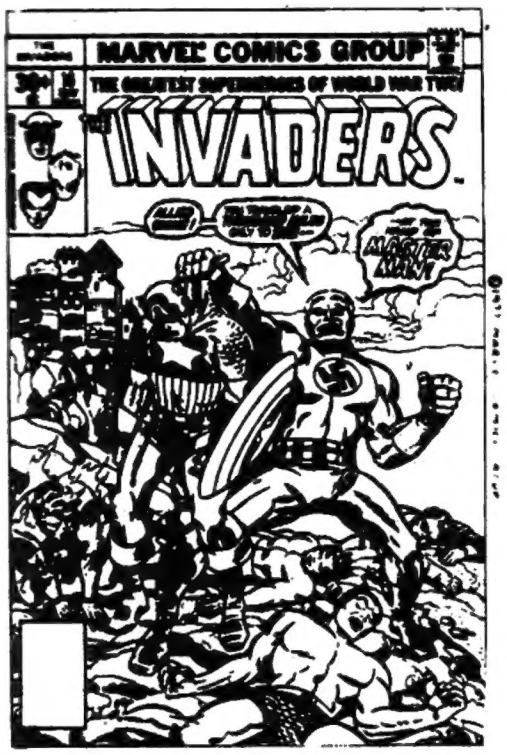
So, in case you need any further inducement to lash out your hard-earned cash, if you send in your £1.00 for 5 issues, for a further mere 20p you can purchase a sturdy metal badge, 2½ inches in diameter, featuring fandom's favourite fowl! This is not the "Howard for President" badge by Berni Wrightson--produced by Zephyr, it features a Brunner pose and the words, in case you happen to be forgetful by nature, "Howard the Duck"... For £1.20, a Howard badge right away, AND five issues of Bem hot off the presses? Now, that's an offer you can't refuse... I hope!

End of crass commercial message. My thanks go to all Bem's contributors and stockists, Milton Finesilver, and Worcester's own Laurence Bowkett, who has volunteered to help me collate Bemusing. But now, read on...

-Martin Lock

art credits

Chris Ash: 4, 9, 13, 28
Ray Aspden: 21
Brian Bonhomme: 26
Greg Chown: 25
Philip Elliott: 20, 24
Guy Lawley: 23
Joe Matthews: 12, 22
Harry McAvinchey: 12
Nick Neocleous: 27
Laurence Piper: 8, 17
Leslie Stannage: 11
Superswipe: 1, 2
Mercy Van Vlack: 16
Al Walker: 18



news

Steve Gerber returns to script OMEGA with #9. The KISS comic will be in colour, but in the b & w size; Gerber is scripter, Al Weiss artist. Kiss will also turn up in HOWARD THE DUCK.

Stan Lee's 4th Origins book is to be THE SUPER-LADIES, and will spotlight Invisible Girl, Black Widow, Wasp, etc.

The "funny animal" books are not going ahead at the moment, until the approach and format is re-evaluated.

MARVEL TALES #81 will include the first colour appearance of the two sample weeks of a daily SPIDER-MAN newspaper strip done six years ago. In SPIDER-MAN, Punisher and The Hit Man have a showdown, and The Prowler is to return; the cross-over between SPIDER-MAN and NOVA will be in #s 171 and 12 respectively.

The third issue of WHAT IF? will be the Jim Shooter, Gil Kane & Klaus Janson tale of the Iron Avengers, when the original Avengers break up and Iron Man forms his own team.

Jim Starlin is to be the new scripter on DR STRANGE; Milgrom will do the layouts, and Nebres the finished art. Starlin is also plotting and laying out a RAMPAGING HULK issue, which Alex Nino will finish; he's not only producing this year's AVENGERS ANNUAL, but has also been given MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL to let him have plenty of space for resolving the Warlock & Thanos plot threads.

On the subject of annuals, Ed Hannigan is to draw DEFENDERS ANNUAL, while Howard's original artist, Val Mayerik, may do the HOWARD THE DUCK ANNUAL. Modok, after guesting in MS MARVEL #6, will be on hand in the IRON MAN ANNUAL. Guest in MS MARVEL #5 is to be The Vision.

Chris Claremont and George Tuska are producing a fill-in issue of AVENGERS -- Perez will do full pencils from #160 on, and FANTASTIC FOUR #184. Tony DeZuniga is drawing a fill-in X-MEN issue.

Rich Buckler may draw MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE for an issue or two, as will Steve Leialoha and also Ernie Chan -- projected guests include Spiderwoman & Ms Marvel. KULL is to be drawn by Chan and Alcala, Esposito is the inker for CHAMPIONS, and Dan Green is to ink GHOST RIDER, while Walt Simonson is doing layouts for THOR, starting with #260.

Upcoming title GODZILLA will treat the big G dramatically, not for comedy; Doug Moench, Herb Trimpe, & Don Perlin are the team of creators, while you can expect to see SHIELD agents on hand. STAR WARS is now on the schedules, with #1 having a July cover-date, from Roy Thomas & Howie Chaykin, joined from #2 on by Steve Leialoha on inks.

Roy Thomas & John Buscema are only producing one issue a month of TARZAN (which starts with an adaptation of "Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar"); overseas, the material ERB Inc themselves had prepared will also be used, and the fortnightly English comic will be using Hogarth newspaper strip reprints. Marv Wolfman & Gil Kane are producing the JOHN CARTER OF MARS book--after one issue inked by Dave Cockrum, Rudy Nebres takes over the inks.

CAPTAIN BRITAIN loses inside colour pages after #23, going to the standard weekly format, with Marvel Team-Up replacing Nick Fury in the back. On March 16th, welcome a weekly war comic called FURY, not tied in with the other Marvel books but with Sgt Fury & His Howling Commandos firmly in control. From March, only 20 monthly Marvels are to be imported by World, at 12p--CHAMPIONS is included in March, replaced with TOMB OF DRACULA from April (#55) on.

PAGE 4 FUNNIES

SECOND CHANCE FOR A HAWKMAN?

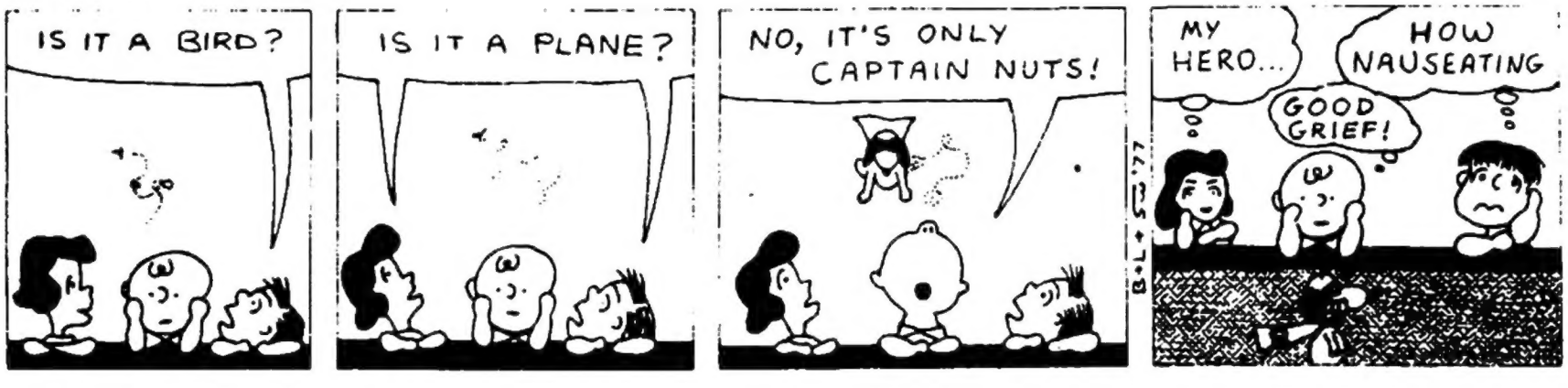
SOMEWHERE IN THE BOWELS OF 75 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, HAWKMAN SITS BROODING...
:SIGH: THERE MUST BE SOME WAY I CAN GET MY OWN BOOK AGAIN...
SUDDENLY
EXCUSE ME SIR — ARE YOU A PUBLISHER?
HUH! WHO ARE YOU?
I'VE HEARD NATIONAL ARE LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER TO HOWARD THE DUCK...
I'M STANGROOM THE WOODPECKER
LATER THAT DAY...
NOK! NOK!
JENET TO PUBL
COME IN!
:GROAN: NOT YOU AGAIN KID. WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?
INTRODUCING...
CART THE HAWK!
GOOD IDEA! SOL, GET ME THE NUMBER OF THE THANAGARIAN FUNNY ANIMAL FARM!
(CHRIS ASH)

MIGHTY MAN

BY L. STANNAGE

CAPTAIN NUTS

by B.L. Schwipe



news

NEW GODS #12, drawn by Newton and Adkins (who's now working exclusively for DC), will have a July or August cover date. Adkins will also ink Curt Swan's SUPERMAN stories.

BATMAN FAMILY is now 8-a-year; #13 is a book-lengther starring Batgirl, Robin, Alfred & ManBat, drawn mainly by Newton, with the ManBat sequence by Marshall Rogers. Irv Novick has pencilled a solo Robin story for the book. "The Joker's Daughter", under the name "Harlequin", is now an official Teen Titans member, as is "Bumblebee", a black heroine --both join in TEEN TITANS #48.

DC SPECIAL #29 features the origin of the JSA, and charter members Superman, Batman, Atom, Spectre, Sandman, Flash, Green Lantern, Dr Fate, Hourman and Hawkman fighting in World War II; ALL STAR #67 has the Super Squad or whatever battling The Underlord, #68 brings in the Psycho Pirate and has the JSA become outlaws; JLA #s 147 and 148 have the JLA, JSA and LSH pitted against Mordru.

RAGMAN #5 was delayed; cover dated July, it will have Joe Kubert art on both stories.

The first 50c, all-new issue of SUPERBOY AND THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES will be #231; the end of this year brings a $2.00 tabloid Legion book, with new material. Another such tabloid is SUPERMAN VS. WONDER WOMAN, set in World War II, by Conway & J.L. Garcia Lopez -- whether these books have 72 or 80 pages isn't yet known.

SUPERMAN ANNUAL #9 (#8 came out in Winter 1963/64) will be an 80-page $1.00 issue, with a full-length new story by Marty Pasko and Cary Bates; also due out this summer is FIVE STAR SUPERHERO SPECTACULAR, with the Batman vs Kobra tale drawn for KOBRA #8, plus new stories starring Green Lantern, Flash, Aquaman, and, after a poll of callers on the DC "Hot Line", the Atom.

MR MIRACLE #19, cover-dated September, is written by Steve Englehart -- he's already up to #24! He has also written Batman in DETECTIVE up to #474.

DC SUPERSTARS #16 has David Michelinie's new "Star Hunters" feature debuting, before it is given its own book; #19 will be a SUPER FRIENDS annual, while #15 has a 30-page team-up of Sgt Rock, Unknown Soldier, and Mlle Marie. Michelinie will be writing the lead feature for MEN OF WAR; Enemy Ace may be the back-up, drawn by Ed Davis.

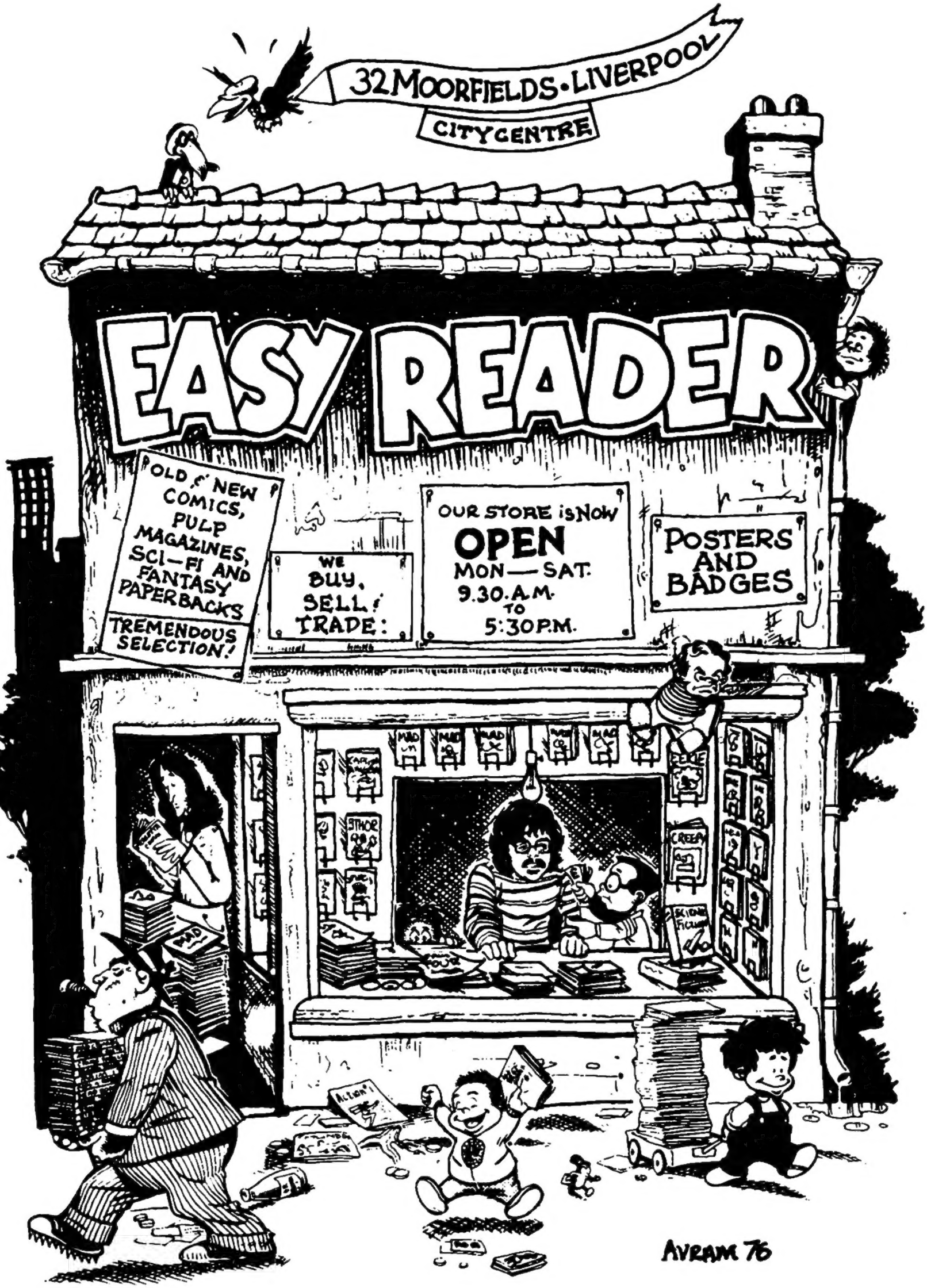
Gray Morrow has done covers for WONDER WOMAN #233, HOUSE OF SECRETS #146, and WEIRD WAR #54; he's also writing and drawing a story for HOUSE OF MYSTERY. Berni Wrightson is doing a cover for the returning SECRETS OF HAUNTED HOUSE, and Dick Dillin and Jack Abel are doing covers for JLA regularly.

Frank McLaughlin is working solely for DC now, inking JLA and FLASH--he's so busy that Joe Giella and Vince Colletta will each ink an issue of FLASH to help him keep ahead.

Various DC heroes will turn up in text novels soon; Warner Paperback Library will put out Superman (by Elliot S! Maggin), Wonder Woman (by Jane Lynch), and Batman (by Denny O'Neil) paperbacks, while Dell are to publish a Challengers of the Unknown book by Ron Goulart.

SHOWCASE returns; #94 will present a new DOOM PATROL. In CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN #82, the 2nd new issue, SWAMP THING will guest-star. Gerry Conway's writing all WONDER WOMAN tales, NEW GODS, and an LSH fill-in.

From Gold Key, some cancelled titles will return in GOLD KEY SPOTLIGHT, using material which was completed before their big cut-back of adventure titles; DAGAR will be in #6, DR SPEKTOR in #8, TRAGG AND THE SKY GODS in #9.


32 MOORFIELDS • LIVERPOOL
CITY CENTRE
EASY READER
OLD & NEW COMICS, PULP MAGAZINES, SCI-FI AND FANTASY PAPERBACKS
TREMENDOUS SELECTION!
WE BUY, SELL & TRADE:
OUR STORE IS NOW OPEN MON — SAT. 9.30 A.M. TO 5:30 P.M.
POSTERS AND BADGES
AVRAM 76

REG USPATOFF

DC certainly have changed over the last few months, and most of the changes have been improvements --between them, Jenette Kahn & Sol Harrison have turned what was in danger of becoming a second-rate, faltering comics company into, if not yet the field leader once more, certainly a "house of ideas", and a better place to work. A better "team spirit" has been engendered at the DC offices, with the rigid barriers between the various main editors thrown down, the return of artwork, fees for reprints, and a better deal for anyone who creates a new character or feature. Marvel had the edge over DC for years on friendliness and fringe benefits; now they don't, and the trend now is for quite a number of Marvel people to turn up on the DC doorstep. People like Bob Brown, Rich Buckler, Steve Englehart, Al Milgrom, and Joe Staton have made the move; if this goes on much longer, despite acquiring Jim Shooter, Lee Elias, & Ernie Chan, to name but a few, Marvel are stretched pretty thin now--with the extra work load of the Edgar Rice Burroughs contract to handle, the loss of any more people could make life very difficult. What would happen if Archie Goodwin got letters from, say, Eugene Colan and Christopher Claremont on his desk one Monday morning, saying they were going to DC? The trickle of reprint fill-ins we've seen of late, always a fair indication of how it goes in the bullpen, could become more of a flood.

New titles, newer formats; the Marvel monopoly on black-oriented books has been ended by BLACK LIGHTNING, while the instalation of the Teen of Steel in the front of ADVENTURE comes in the class "why didn't anyone think of it before?" -- and putting back AQUAMAN into his own book's good, too.

As I mentioned last time, I have my reservations about the 80-page Dollar Comics--I was surprised to find they didn't have square spines like the old 100-pagers, and the even older Eighty Page Giants -- a saddle-stitched spine isn't quite as impressive, somehow. The main purpose of these throwbacks to the forties (in the nicest way), to my mind, is to make the 50 cent comics look comparatively cheap. The 30c format, with now a mere 17 pages of story, instead of the 24 or so it had a few years ago (for half the price!), can't have any future --a 52-page format, offering twice as many pages of story, will have to be adopted, completely & soon. Marvel's annuals and their first regular 50-center, WHAT IF, seem to be doing well, and, with DC eliminating those irritating reprints, titles like BATMAN FAMILY, JLA, and DC SPECIAL should prosper. A complete switch out of the slim format into 50c and $1.00 sizes by the end of this year is vital (though I'd expect the 52-pagers to rise to 60c soon) if comics, as we know them, are to continue.

One side-effect, of course, will be a cut-back in the number of titles--neither company is going to double the number of pages of story they put out per month. The last time thicker books were tried, Marvel were going to combine IRON MAN and DAREDEVIL, for instance; and some books would go down to bimonthly or even quarterly. Starfire might become a back feature in ADVENTURE perhaps -- and last all the longer; the Inhumans might share with the Champions.

Less titles would mean better display on the newstands for the remainder, and therefore a higher sales ratio--but the thin format has to be scrapped. That needs co-operation between Marvel & DC ...possible? -RU

RICH MORRISSEY'S ENGLAND

On my first visit to England in late 1973, I left fandom behind me for the most part, and devoted most of my time to gawking at the same things the rest of us American tourists do--the horsedrawn carriages that still walk the streets, the pomp and circumstance attending the wedding of Princess Anne, the incredible antiquity of structures like the Tower of London, Stonehenge, and the ruins dating back to Roman times in places like Bath. Not until the end of my semester was drawing near, and chance encounters with Chris Lowder and Alan Austin, did I even realise that there was any organised fandom in your country at all!

©1977 DC COMICS INC

And yet one thing led to another, and even after my return to the USA I found myself a semi-regular contributor to Alan's "Fantasy Unlimited". Alan put me in touch with Martin Lock and Greg Chown; they in turn put me in contact with other distinguished names in UK fandom such as Richard Burton and Andy Johnson --until, like the proverbial snowball rolling downhill, I found myself more firmly entrenched in British fandom than I had yet been in that of my homeland. Even now, when I've progressed from my little-known American base (the late, lamented LEGION OUTPOST) to a position closer to the centre of American fandom, I still seem to have something of a special position in UK fandom -- for, on my second visit to England I was greeted with a reception whose like is given only to pros over here! When I went to my first British convention, the August Comicon at the Regent Centre Hotel, I discovered that my reputation had preceded me--and I only wish I could have lived up to it. In a quiz there, I served on one of three teams -- fans versus dealers versus the audience -- and led our team into a total rout.

The convention itself lacked some of the boisterousness and excitement of the American cons -- when even the local Boston bashes try to obtain at least a token pro (Fred Fredericks, the artist on Mandrake the Magician, is almost a fixture at the monthly marts) Paul Neary isn't exactly a name to stir the blood. And the convention only lasted two days, while just about any American con worthy of the name lasts at least three days and some carry on for as many as five. Little wonder it seemed to me that it was over before it had really had a chance to get properly started...

But there were some very memorable moments nonetheless--meeting Martin Lock, Nige Edwards, Hunter Tremayne, Ruan Lanihorne and countless others who had been nothing but names to me for the first time--generously selling my copy of BATMAN #281, the only one at the whole con, it seemed, to a gentleman who owned the European rights to James Bond--having a beer with a pair of interesting British fans whose names I wish I could remember, telling as much as I knew of the sad story of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster and trying unsuccessfully to get them into the room where the elite of the British fan world --including me of all people!--were partying--

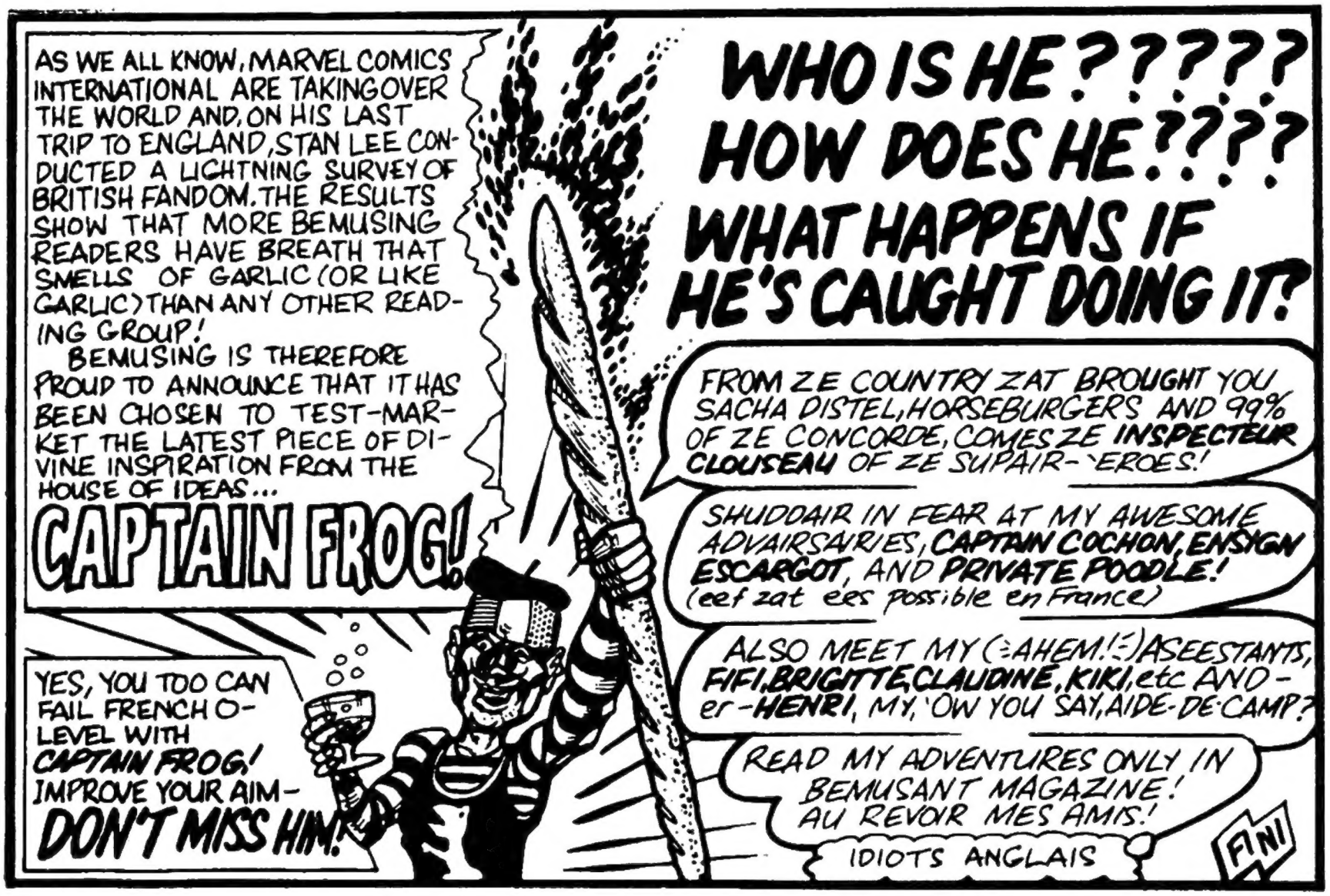
the party itself, with the young kid who reminded me so of Dave Koenig back in New York --the great auction, in which a classic World's Finest was tossed around with abandon unthinkable in a country where dealers can afford to lose their shirts on Howard the Duck #1, and yet another Marvel scarcely older was thought a bargain at double what even Howard #1 goes for in the States. A remarkable experience.

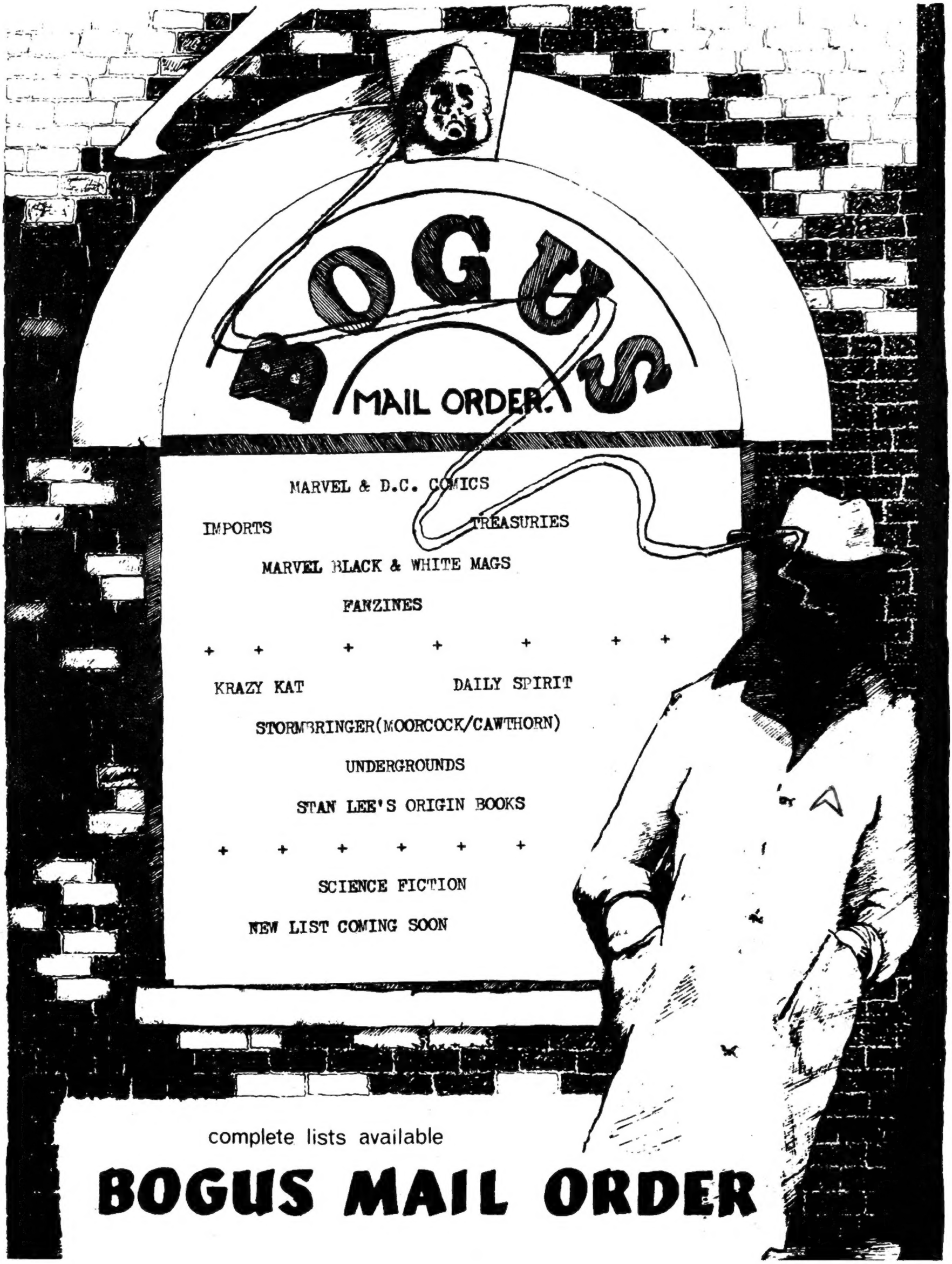
And so, indeed, were my visits to the homes of these fans before and after. First there was an afternoon with Richard Burton, eagerly discussing everything from Comic Media News to Asterix and exchanging the latest news on those crazy comics professionals. The neatness of the Burton home contrasted sharply with the way things were thrown every which way at the Nick Landau residence, yet there too we spent a whole day of excited conversation among the stacks of comics that had flown over from America even after I had, broken only by infrequent visits to the only McDonald's I ever saw in London. Then there were my three return visits to Alan Austin (two to his shop and one to his home). Most of all, there was the week I spent at Martin Lock's Northwood home, as his parents very kindly took me in after my original hostess (not a fan) was called away. My special thanks to Mrs Lock for taking such pains to show me the area, and of course to Martin for letting me roam freely through his box of Golden Age comics--even if he did extract an article for the new Yancy Street Journal, not to mention this belated column, in exchange...

And then, of course, there were the nonfannish pursuits, some of them unexpected (when Alan's absence from his Millwall home gave me the chance to see the Zero Meridian and the Royal Naval Museum and even the real Cutty Sark in nearby Greenwich), and some of them planned well in advance. Visiting Paris for the first time and seeing the twisted streets, straight out of a Jerry Grandenetti drawing, all lit up even close to midnight for a total effect more like a scene from "The Cabinet of Dr Caligari". Buying an original Asterix book right off the stands--climbing the Eiffel Tower and looking down on those glorious white buildings -- even the ferry back across the Channel and those horrible crowds of people all getting their passports stamped (how lucky I am to live where you don't need one, even to cross the Canadian border)--all adventures I won't soon forget.

I'm back in school now, and no longer can afford to wander so far from my legal studies for at least another two years. But maybe, some day, I'll be able to come back to England for a third visit...

-RHM


AS WE ALL KNOW, MARVEL COMICS INTERNATIONAL ARE TAKING OVER THE WORLD AND, ON HIS LAST TRIP TO ENGLAND, STAN LEE CONDUCTED A LIGHTNING SURVEY OF BRITISH FANDOM. THE RESULTS SHOW THAT MORE BEMUSING READERS HAVE BREATH THAT SMELLS OF GARLIC (OR LIKE GARLIC) THAN ANY OTHER READING GROUP!
BEMUSING IS THEREFORE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO TEST-MARKET THE LATEST PIECE OF DIVINE INSPIRATION FROM THE HOUSE OF IDEAS...
CAPTAIN FROG!
YES, YOU TOO CAN FAIL FRENCH O-LEVEL WITH CAPTAIN FROG! IMPROVE YOUR AIM-
DON'T MISS HIM!
WHO IS HE????
HOW DOES HE????
WHAT HAPPENS IF HE'S CAUGHT DOING IT?
FROM ZE COUNTRY ZAT BROUGHT YOU SACHA DISTEL, HORSEBURGERS AND 99% OF ZE CONCORDE, COMES ZE INSPECTEUR CLOUSEAU OF ZE SUPAIR-'EROES!
SHUDDAIR IN FEAR AT MY AWESOME ADVAIRSAIRIES, CAPTAIN COCHON, ENSIGN ESCARGOT, AND PRIVATE POODLE! (eef zat ees possible en France)
ALSO MEET MY (=AHEM!=) ASEESTANTS, FIFI, BRIGITTE, CLAUDINE, KIKI, etc AND-er-HENRI, MY, 'OW YOU SAY, AIDE-DE-CAMP?
READ MY ADVENTURES ONLY IN BEMUSANT MAGAZINE! AU REVOIR MES AMIS!
IDIOTS ANGLAIS
FIN!


OGUS
MAIL ORDER
MARVEL & D.C. COMICS
IMPORTS
TREASURIES
MARVEL BLACK & WHITE MAGS
FANZINES
+ + + + + + +
KRAZY KAT
DAILY SPIRIT
STORMBRINGER(MOORCOCK/CAWTHORN)
UNDERGROUNDS
STAN LEE'S ORIGIN BOOKS
+ + + + + +
SCIENCE FICTION
NEW LIST COMING SOON
complete lists available
BOGUS MAIL ORDER

THE NIGE EDWARDS INTERVIEW: HOWARD THE DUCK

Interviewer's note: Our rival for the minds of UK fandom had been featuring interviews with people like Stan Lee, Marv Wolfman, and James Warren, so our editor assigned me to interview the most popular person in America today. "Jimmy Carter?" I asked. "Woody Allen? Richard Nixon? Harksy and Stuff?" But I was wrong every time. "No," he said--"Howard the Duck!" He'd arranged a date and time for the interview, and he told me how to get there -- but I refused! A fan of my integrity interview a duck? But then he showed me a photo of Howard's flatmate, Beverly, who as a mate looked anything but flat! I was on my way...it seemed only a few moments later when I knocked at the door, and started the tape as I heard someone approach...

NP: Er, hello, I'm from Bemusing Magazine and I've come to--

HD: We don't want any! (slam!)

NP: Yeiow! By dose! (through the keyhole) Hey, wait! Howard, I'm the ace reporter sent by Bemusing Magazine to interview you! I've even brought a free copy of Bem to prove it!

HD: I dunno, there's a lot of real weirdos in this city, and the way you look... I mean, kid, you ain't exactly an average-looking guy, y'know?

NP: Hell, look who's talking!

HD: Sarcasm already. You must be a reporter, come in, take a chair.

NP: Thanks, I probably will. And thanks for granting this interview--apart from Press Conferences, this must be your first proper interview.

HD: Actually, no. Steven Ross Gerber, my ex-campaign manager, interviewed me for that Howard Treasury that's out now.

NP: Huh? I had the idea first, gerber must be picking my brains!

HD: I doubt it, bub; after all, he can't pick what isn't there...

NP: Quite, and...eh? Anyway, I'd like to say I'm sorry to see your presidential aspirations go up in smoke, now that Jimmy Carter has been elected.

HD: It's America that will suffer, not me! Besides, I was robbed--it was crummy sabotage! I was screwed, but good!

NP: Just the same, either way you cut it, I couldn't see the American public being, no offense, crazy enough to elect a duck!

HD: They put Nixon in...

NP: That's true...but let me ask you about... about...about...WOW!

HD: I see you've noticed Beverly.

NP: Man, what a doll! And they're even bigger --er, she's even bigger in real life!

HD: What was the name of that rag you work for, The Sun?

NP: Yeah, well...er, how come your sidekick is a girl?

HD: So what's wrong about that? What should I do, team up with a boy and dress in silly costumes, and get arrested? What ya take me for, a kinky pervert?

NP: It's a bit strange though, isn't it? I mean, a girl and a duck!

HD: Okay, so it's a bit unnatural, maybe I oughtta get six other midgets to move in, and that'd make it acceptable.

NP: Huh? How come?

HD: "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" is a respected kid's story, ain't it?

NP: Sure is. Heck, I'm not so tall--can I move in with you and Snow White?

HD: I may be only a duck to you, but I've got my pride! No chance.

NP: Aww, gee, you ducks have all the luck.

HD: I thought it would come to this; jealousy, that's what it boils down to. Besides, if you're so "normal", how come the love of your life ain't here with you now?

NP: Aww, come on, how could I bring 5,000 comics with me?

HD: And you say <u>I'm</u> strange...you comics fans are all crazy!

NP: Er, yes; perhaps we could go on to some other subjects?

HD: Just as soon as you take your sweaty orbs off Bev's "subjects"!

NP: Right. Er, I seem to be losing control of this interview...

HD: You'll lose control of your teeth, buster, if'n you don't stop eyeing Bev!

NP: My, you're possesive -- you must think an awful lot of Bev.

HD: Not as much as what you're thinking, ya creep! Now leave off, you're ruffling my feathers. Bev is my friend, and out of everything that has happened to me so far on this loused-up world, she's the only good thing.

BS: I love you too, ducky. I was having it pretty rough until you came along, too.

NP: Er, Ms Beverly, Bev, I wonder if I...

HD: Hey, Mr Supermouth, you're here to interview me, not the lady, remember?

NP: Sorry about that...

HD: A minute longer and you woulda been--most people are, when they're on the critical list. Now, come on, ask me something.

NP: Hmm...from your comments before, I take it you're not too happy on this planet?

HD: Mister, you can take it and put it where the sun <u>never</u> shines!

NP: Simmer down, Howard--you're burning, you'll cook your own goose! I'm on your side, pal. This world hasn't exactly been kind to me, either.

HD: I'm sorry, kid, but it gets you down sometimes, being in a minority of one; there's no equal opportunities commission for ducks on this dumb world.

NP: Maybe you should start a Duck's Lib? It worked for the ladies.

HD: Only on the periphery. You can alter a few laws, make a few new ones, but you can't really change the way people think... In that way, I guess, everybody is in a minority of one, a universe unto themselves.

NP: But no man--or duck--is an island.

HD: Spare me the clichés, or at least wait until I've eaten, I can't take it on an empty stomach. 'Sides, I'm gonna lick this beetle-brained world, I ain't gonna let a bunch of hairless apes put me down!

NP: That's more like it! Think positive, and you can't lose.

HD: Oh, yeah? I've got a sinking feeling that I'm going to be the exception to that rule.

NP: I can see that this subject is getting you down, but there's one last question I've got to ask you. There's a nasty rumour

going around that you don't come from another world at all, but--

HD: A complete falsification! This planet's really got the knife into us ducks!

NP: Wait, Howard--there's more, and worse, to come. They say you're not from another Earth, but are in reality the illegitimate offspring of Donald and Daisy Duck!

HD: WAUGHH! Bev, phone my lawyer!

BS: But you don't <u>have</u> a lawyer, Howard..

HD: Probably all bought off by Le Beaver, who started the whole smear, I'll bet! If he wasn't dead, I'd kill the bum! But, like they say, the evil that men, and beavers, do lives on after them.

NP: Ahem! "Le Beaver"?

HD: Sure, Le Beaver, a giant, French-speaking beaver who put the skids on me and my election campaign.

NP: A giant, French beaver?? Sure it wasn't something more conventional, along the Watergate lines?

HD: Look, punk, when I say a giant beaver, I mean...Don't believe me, do you, mack?

NP: Of course I do; who was his henchman, the Great Pumpkin??

HD: Okay! That's it, out! O.U.T. out! First you ogle my girl, and now you insinuate that I'm nuts!

NP: You've got to admit that it does sound odd. What else was this water-rat after, your kidneys??

HD: Waaugh! Don't bring that old ratbag, the Kidney Lady into this! I'm as sane as the next man -- er, duck! Now, OUT, before I stub my cigar out on you where it'll do the most good.

NP: So, I'm going -- give me a break, will ya? Last question. What are your plans for the next U.S. election?

HD: A whole new change in style. Next time, <u>I'm</u> campaign manager, and Gerber is the presidential candidate.

NP: Ye Gods! That'll never work! There's more chance of a duck becoming president than a crazy weirdo like Steve!!!

HD: Okay, so it ain't perfect, there's a few bugs that need ironing out--what's the big deal? Now, move, will ya, you bother me!

NP: I know it's a mistake asking, but what is the ticket that Steve's riding on?

HD: Home rule for Big Mac hamburger joints! An elf in every family closet! Compulsory reading of Omega! Bozos unite! And now, goodbye already!

NP: Gulp! America really would get the kind of president she so richly deserves! And on that uplifting, thought-provoking, and mind-boggling note, I'll say good night, America, and good luck! You'll need it! Hey, what are you doing, Howard -- put me down this moment, I -- Waughh! -NPE

AND NOW, ENTER THE BACK ISSUES.....

Yes, once again it's your chance to fill in most of the gaps in your Bem collection. You can get the 11 fanzines, over 200 pages, for 90p, or any 7 for 70p. So, off we go:

Bem-1 - 12 pages for 8p. E-Man #1 reviewed, tale-enders, pricing; Collector's Edition? Summer Comics Special - 4 pages for 8p. Art by Chown & Superswipe, news & reviews.

Bem-3 - 12 pages for 10p. "Bullpun Bulletins" page, Manhunter article, Paul Rose art.

N-Zine #1 - 16 pages for 11p. Edwoods, a comic strip by Ken Cropper, news, reviews, etc!

Bem-5 - 16 pages for 14p. "Fatlas Comics" by Pete April, Jack Straw, & Superswipe, etc.

Bem-6 - 20 pages for 14p. Captain Nuts comes to Bem! Plus Reg Uspatoff, Ed Sallis, and all.

Bem-7 - 16 + 8 pages for 14p. Contains the far-out WEIRD TRASH "Bamboozling" take-off!

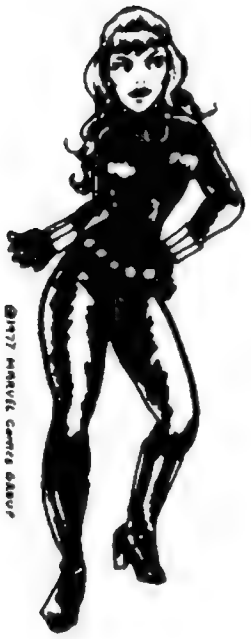
Bem-8 - 20 pages for 14p. Conan appraised by Hunter Tremayne, plus the regular features.

Bem-9 - 40 pages for 28p. A special heroine double issue, by top USA and UK fans.

Bem-10 - 20 pages for 14p. "The Bem Story--So Far" by Jim Korock, plus lots more stuff...

Bem-11 - 20 pages for 14p. Red Sonja by Hunter Tremayne, Batman Meets Thor by Chris Ash, etc.

MOTHER OF MITRA! WHAT DEVILRY IS THIS? TELL ME STREET MERCHANT... WHAT HAS BECOME OF "DARK THEY WERE AND GOLDEN-EYED"?
DON'T THEY KNOW IT'S MOVED TO: 9-12 ST. ANNE'S COURT, (OFF WARDOUR ST.) LONDON W1. (PHONE: 01-734-4260 AS BEFORE)
BRIAN·BOLLAND
AND NOW THEY REALLY HAVE GOT THE LARGEST SELECTION OF S.F. IN THE WORLD, THE LARGEST POSTER GALLERY IN ENGLAND... AND ROOM TO BROWSE (AND BREATHE) IN A SEPARATE COMIC SECTION WITH 50,000 BACK ISSUES!



KATHLEEN GLANCY

What do I think of the name "Counter-Earth Crew"? Hmmm--that's not one of them that's been running about in England trying to put Gorean philosophy into practice, is it? You know, the fellow that got what must have been a very painful kick from a lady who declined to be a victim. (Right on, sister!) No, I will be charitable and assume that they are all fans of Warlock. High Evolutionary fans? Blob of energy that once was Galactus fans? At least their zine was named for the patron god of one of the few barbarians who doesn't go in for rape, largely because he has no trouble at all finding willing women.

We are about to explore an interesting dialectic variation. In my part of the country 'pansy' doesn't necessarily mean homosexual--it more commonly means a dandy, a fop, someone who is more fastidious than is considered to be virile. These things were certainly applicable to the valet in MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #29 -- I mean, he wore a flower in his buttonhole and, according to Moon Knight, aftershave or cologne strong enough to be detected from a helicopter. There again, he could be meant to be a stereotyped effeminate homosexual -- it depends, I suppose, on the precise connotation of 'pansy' in America. It could, of course, also be argued that even if the term is offensive, it is in character for the hero, being a butch and heterosexual type himself, to speak in that way. After all, what would Nick Fury have said in such circumstances? Or Conan? An interesting thought--when the term 'mother-loving' is used, as it is all too frequently, should we assume that the character addressed is meant to be incestuous? Or just that the speaker is being insulting?

Still, it ill becomes the comics industry to make fun of homosexuals, considering how many of their heroes are, according to some sources at least, either that way themselves or prone to other deviations from the norm, so that they'd provide a full-time job for Supershrink, trick-cyclist to the super-community, whose cases include:

A suspected homosexual (Dr F.W. sent him):

"Why do I wear a body-stocking? It's my uniform damnit -- it strikes terror into the hearts of cowardly superstitious criminals, it -- it does not look silly. Not to criminals. What about the kid?? He wanted to wear his suit -- I never asked him to. Have we ever WHAT???!" Thump.

An oedipal masochist:

"Yeah, sure, the police suspect me of three murders and 157 robberies. I get a bad press. My aunt has heart attacks every other week. No, I don't want to quit. Not often, anyway. Why not? Well, I--no, I do not enjoy suffering. What about my aunt?? Have I ever wanted to WHAT??!" Thump.

A fetishist:

"So she wears fishnet tights. So what? Yeah, and a black leotard. So wh--and a blonde wig. What's it to do with--no, that's not all that attracts me. What about my Robin Hood suit--what would you wear to fight crime with a bow and arrows?? Do I take it off when I WHAT???" Thump.

A schizophrenic:

"Nay, wherefore shouldst I resenteth my Don Blake persona, as thou calleest it? Didst not mine imperial sire create it, and insinuateth thou that I be not loyal to the Allfather's every command? Why shouldeth I ever mention my mother? What about Jane and Sif?? With which of them have I WHAT!!??" Thumpeth.

A suspected paranoid:

"Why haven't I ever married her? Well, my enemies would try to hurt me by harming her if I -- of course I have enemies. I have hundreds of enemies. Thousands. Yes, since you ask, she is known to be my girlfriend. I don't know why my enemies haven't tried to hurt her anyway. Maybe they've no imagination. I tell you, I have enemies. Lots of--" (Here a bald gentleman and a green-skinned humanoid computer went by, and the patient abruptly left...)

Two time-travellers, one with satyriasis and one with frigidity, both homicidal maniacs:

"Crom!"

"Mitra! And his mother! And while I'm at it, Tarim's blood!! Where are we, Cimmerian?"

"I don't know, she-devil, but -- Crom, who's the little runt in the funny clothes? More bloody sorcerors, I'd think. Nothing but damn sorcerors all the time, every time I turn around, sorcerors!"

"You! Put us back this minute, unless you're offering gold or jewels. What do you want? Oh sure, you want to help us. I'm not lying down on any couch, especially not with my comrade here around."

"To Stygia's Seven Hells with this! You--send us back now or else--" Cut, stab, hack, etc.

Funny thing, Supershrink hasn't been seen since. But New York now has an incredible pair of new muggers, who run around in a fur loincloth and a chain-mail bikini, and... -KG

REACTION

send your letters to: Martin Lock.

Dear Martin,

So Marvel are at full stretch with the Tarzan contract to fulfill and Conway's departure. I ask you, need they be? With Archie Goodwin and Steve Gerber only writing one book each, as well as McGregor being sacked and Englehart virtually having the same happening to him? Moench now has had most of his books axed, so surely he could write all the Tarzan adaptations; since adaptations seem to be his forte. Personally, I think if Thomas has to do all that Tarzan material, we will see Conan stories not written by him. Can you imagine a headline in Bem, "Kirby gets Conan"?

Marvel are now getting into their greatest ever rut, while DC on the other hand are now going through a renaissance, and should soon become a far more healthy company--with a bit of luck they should shake Marvel out of their tree of arrogance. The sooner Englehart starts writing Superman the better it will be for heralding the end of Marvel dominance; to me, put in the right hands (Englehart's) Superman could become a really good character. But the chances of that happening are almost nil, so DC will just have to shake the tree until Marvel fall out.

Sorry to turn this letter into a DC v Marvel one, Martin... Oh yes, I think I'll write an article in answer to Hunter Tremayne's "The Lady is Lethal", because I think that most of the Red Sonja stories are pretty poor. Are you interested, Martin?

All that leaves me to say is, A Happy New Year and go easy with the sheep.

-Neil Jackson.

Actually, it's really Nige who's got this big fixation about sheep -- did you think that his holiday camp was for <u>people</u>?

Dear Martin,

Please find enclosed a postal order for 70p for more issues of Bemusing, when my subscription expires after issue 12. Of course, for this fee, I might expect to read a few complimentary things about Gerry Conway from time to time. He seems to be a bit unpopular with some people--in truth, I understand it not.

-David Fielder.

Dear Martin,

Long time, no hear, right? This is just to let you know I still exist & to apologise for not writing sooner, but college tends to fill up time all too easily. I picked up Bem #11, November -- another consistently good issue, with plenty of news, cover reproductions, and some quite good illos. I love Dark They Were's ad by Brian Bolland--why not try & get him to do some illos for your zine? The letter pages were interesting & amusing as ever, though I can't work up much enthusiasm for running quarrels between letter-writers. I know when I first stumbled across fanzines, in particular Comic Catalog and Oracle, I was amazed by the amount of name-dropping and mutual slanging that went on -- fandom's small enough without dividing it even further. As you yourself probably realise, the "decade of the 20's" is a troubled time, not least for the comicollector like myself facing strong doubts about collecting & reading comics. More & more comics these days, particularly from the Marvel machine, lack any creative innovation and read more & more like issues of a year, 2 years, 5 or 10 years ago, simply redrawn & rewritten. Another factor that puts many fans like me off "panelology" is the horde of young "collectors" who seem to lack any taste or real interest in comics beyond what they may be worth in ten years time. While in Dark They Were's excellent new shop recently, some young Marvel fans were enthusing loudly & annoyingly about atrocious comics -- for example one discovered a copy of Iron Man Annual 1 -- all reprint, of almost no interest or quality--another decided to buy a No. 1 because it was more likely to become valuable. Now it's very easy to think that I was not like that at their age, that I had more taste & sense, but it's probably not true and of course there's always the likelihood that they'll grow up & discover the more satisfying aspects of comics--rather than collecting them for their likely value. What woke me up out of my exclusive collecting of Marvel comics was Kirby moving to DC -- I'd believed all Marvel had said about Brand Echh and avoided them consistently, always putting them down. But then I discovered, thru Kirby's move, Adams' GL/GA & Batman, the new Superman by Swanderson, the beautiful mystery comics from DC at that time, and then the ERB & Gothic comix and the 100-pagers. If I hadn't discovered DC at that time, I would doubtless have soon grown very tired of Marvel & given up collecting; in fact

a couple of fellow collectors did just that, having stuck to Marvel despite my attempts to introduce them to the great things DC were doing. There's some small debate in the CMN lettercol that the bulk of fans -- the young "pathetic" Marvelites -- shouldn't be put down by supposedly maturer fans; I don't pretend to do that. I still think that such fans are being blinded to the wider world of comix but I accept that they make up fandom, and without them most of comicdom would not be able to survive. Instead of putting them down, older fans should try at least to open a few eyes & introduce them to other companies, formats, artists & characters. It still frightens me, though, to talk to those young fans at Marts and discover an enthusiasm for poorly-drawn & scripted comics, & a lack of interest in other areas of comix. A letter in a recent CU summed up the way I feel, as I begin to realise just how much garbage is put out by the comic companies. "94 per cent of everything is crap". It maybe is a slightly smaller percentage, but it isn't far out, at least today. I'm now discovering the Warren magazines, undergrounds like Fantagor, Star Reach etc, and now the visual novels -- you were right, Martin, Steranko's new "Chandler" is probably the greatest production in the comix medium this year, and may well be a trend of comics to come. So many of the main titles, particularly now from Marvel, are barely readable. DC Comics Inc have a slightly better attitude--even their low-key titles do have an atmosphere of creativity, at least to some extent. I'm particularly impressed with Kubert's RAGMAN series -- it's a really well-produced title, but suffers from the lack of space & frequency. And with DC's new formats, particularly the $1 all-new books, the company is moving in an innovative direction. In many ways, the Dollar Comics are perhaps the most intriguing development, being almost a return to the Golden Age idea of having numerous supporting features in a large, good value magazine. Any news on the DC distribution? I have heard it's supposed to start up in January -- let's hope so. I was very impressed with the new Craig Russell Dr Strange Annual--although hardly a unique storyline, visually it was quite stunning -- what else will Russell be doing now?

In many ways I agree with Alan Austin in hoping for some cut-backs in the years ahead. There are just too many comics on the market today, and with the current fandom-mania, a slump must be on the way. This could have a good effect, if it relieves the companies of having to push out so many titles & straining their creative staff to the limit. Of course, it could ultimately destroy the medium completely--maybe the steadily decreasing sales of comics will lead to this. I personally hope that DC will break through & topple Marvel in the years ahead -- Marvel could do with being put in 2nd place for a while & being made to try & improve their line. As it is, Marvel can produce drivel & still sell well, relying on the hordes of Marvel followers who buy, buy, buy, regardless of quality or creativity.

My interest isn't waning in comics -- it is simply becoming more discriminating. With money so short, there's no point spending on comics that aren't worth the money. Fandom in Britain is still too young--I only hope we can all grow up in time to see the comix medium accepted as something of importance (not necessarily an "art-form", as that always sounds pretentious), and achieving a high level of presentation and quality. Comics still have a long way to go -- I just hope the supposed 'comics fandom' don't destroy the comic's potential before they realise it.

I still can see myself collecting comics in years to come, but only as a hobby, an enjoyable pastime but not the only thing in life. This country is particularly difficult to collect comics in, as it still treats comics as kids' stuff of no importance. I am still determined to visit the U.S. next year or the year after, and, quite possibly, emigrate there. Britain is behind in so many things, particularly in its attitudes; it mocks and derides comix-collectors, or any enthusiasts for things that are 'not accepted'--contact with some Americans at college is making me realise how stuffy and blinkered we are--we lack any creative drive or dynamism, and we're behind the times in more than merely accepting comix as a valid medium.

I'm sorry this letter is so rambling and lacking in direction -- it's just thoughts put on paper as they occur to me. '77 will be an interesting year. DC is developing, redirecting its energies with a powerful personality as publisher giving the company new purpose. This year, DC have got to make it to the top.

Maybe the turning point will be Steve Gerber taking Howard the Duck to DC? Stranger things have happened, and probably will.

Thanks for reading.

All the best for Bem in '77!

-Paul D! Gravett.

It's nice to have you back in Bem, Paul--stay around, won't you! There is indeed more to comics than Marvel; discovering Prince Valiant, The First Kingdom, Star Reach, EC, Carl Barks, Dogman, Harold Hedd, or even Lois Lane does add an extra perspective to Our Favourite Hobby.

FOREVER PEOPLE
WE SELL:- MARVELS,
D.C.s, WARRENS-
SCI-FI & FANTASY
BOOKS - IMPORTED
COMICS & BOOKS-
UNDERGROUND COMIX
OLD COMICS - POSTERS
S.A.E. FOR LIST-
"FOREVER PEOPLE"
11. THE PROMENADE,
GLOUCESTER RD.,
BRISTOL.
MARTIN ROBSON

Dear Martin and the Bem Men,

I have just received #11 of Bemusing, which I may add was my first, hopefully of many. At first sight I was disappointed by the size of it, but as I read through, my opinion, and my enthusiasm, was increased.

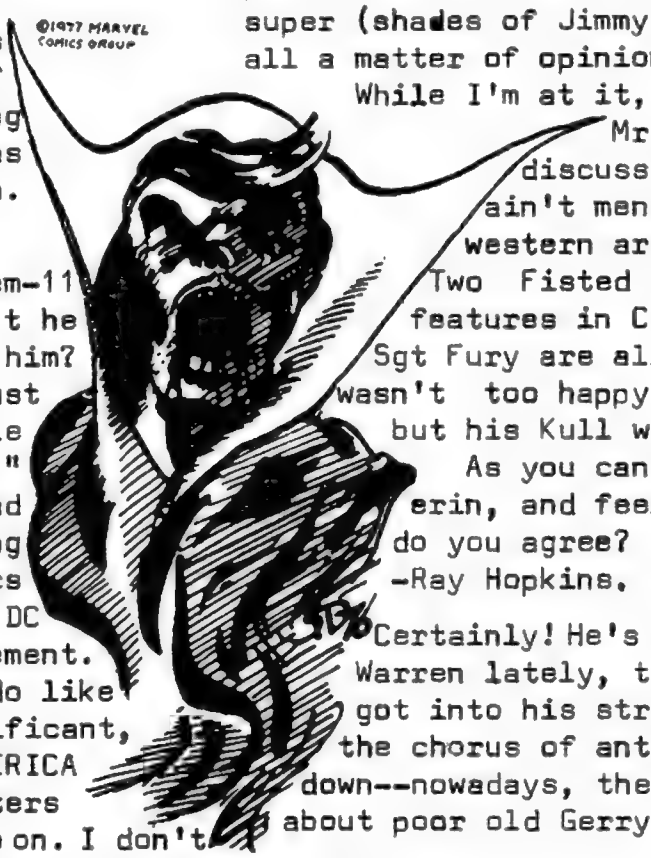
My only point on the news section is, "will X-Men continue to be imported?" I can't find #102 anywhere.

"Mighty Man" and "Captain Nuts" were very amusing, as was "Batman Meets Thor"; "Fan-Things" prompted me to send for most of the fanzines discussed -- as well as a five-issue subscription to Bem. (Crawl! Crawl!)

My only other statement, unfortunately a criticism, is to do with the Red Sonja article on the back page. The article itself was fine, but the illustration was a complete copy from page 21 of Foom #14. Is that why the artist is called Superswipe?

-Matthew Moorcraft.

You've got it, Matthew! Using Supes is easier than cutting up a copy of Foom! And X-Men is no longer being imported, as of December; Ruan was right about that one in his column.



Dear Martin and the Bem Crew,

I have to confess my letter in Bem-11 was biased. I said "Why couldn't he (Kirby) stay at DC where fans liked him? Sales, I hear. At Marvel, fans just don't appreciate 30's and 40's style stories--plot, but no good dialogue." Now, it must seem to anyone who read that that I'm practically saying that DC fans accept inferior comics material; I want to apologise to DC fans who were offended by that statement. I may be mainly a Marvelite, but I do like GL/GA, AQUAMAN, etc. It is significant, on the letters pages of CAPTAIN AMERICA and ETERNALS, that we only see letters saying "Kirby's the greatest" & so on. I don't think that one has appeared saying "What happened to the characterisation that Englehart put into this strip? All we get is action like you've never seen it before!"

Bem-11 was great -- this <u>is</u> one of the UK's best fanzines. Now, Martin (or Edwoods), it's question time! <u>Is</u> Marvel doing Tarzan? One 'zine says yes, one says no, what am I supposed to believe? ((Bem says yes -- trust us! Number one should be cover-dated June)) Could you tell me to what address and department of Condé Nast must I write concerning Marvel Treasury Editions? ((Pass)) Is Marvel <u>really</u> going to do funny-animal comics? ((Truly! Would we lie to you? There is, however, almost no truth to the rumour that Marvel are to do a book based on "The Rampaging Edwoods"...)) I'm glad PRISONER was scrapped, because another Kirby book would have driven me up the wall!

-Ken Moore.

What is this, an editorial staff or a rock group I'm running? First "Martin and the Bem Men", now it's a "crew" I'm lumbered with--er, I mean assisted by. "Captain Emlock" does have a certain ring to it, though, I suppose...

Dear Martin,

Thank you for Bem-11; I really enjoyed it, it fills a need. Well, Captain Britain has come but I'm afraid he won't be with us long; quite icky I thought, and the quality is poor, while the page count doesn't compare with the other British Marvels -- mind you, I've been wrong before (many times).

I'm a little concerned with the continual battering of Frank Robbins, who I like a lot; his Batman, Shadow, mystery stories, and in particular Cap America and Invaders are rather super (shades of Jimmy Young)--I realise it's all a matter of opinion, well this is mine.

While I'm at it, let's hear a word for Mr John Severin; when fans discuss artists, his name just ain't mentioned. This guy is <u>the</u> western artist, while his work for Two Fisted Tales, his satirical features in Cracked, and his inks on Sgt Fury are all pretty tremendous. I wasn't too happy with his Hulk period, but his Kull was superb...

As you can tell, I like John Severin, and feel he's worth a mention; do you agree?

-Ray Hopkins.

Certainly! He's done some good work for Warren lately, too. And, since Robbins got into his stride with the Invaders, the chorus of anti-Robbinsites has died down--nowadays, the fashion is to complain about poor old Gerry Conway!

Dear Martin,

One of the main reasons I get Bem is for the latest US news (although a free gift--something like PLAYBOY's centrefold--might entice me to get a subscription). About half of Bem is news, fan information, or the "Tale-Enders" that have become your trademark. This, mixed with the "Reaction" section and Hunter Tremayne's REH page, added up to an admirable mix. Let's hope you can keep producing the same standard in future issues.

I wish I could say the same of the two major US companies, though. The news reported each month gets more and more disheartening. One moment Marvel is celebrating the return of Kirby and Conway, the next National ("DC Comics Inc"?) are cheering about their gain of Steve

Englehart. Now, after causing untold problems with his almost-childish attitudes, Conway has departed again. Good riddance. If only Stan Lee could somehow tempt Steve Englehart back to the AVENGERS strip, and maybe CAPTAIN AMERICA, if Kirby agreed--which I doubt...

Saddest news of the month was that of the demise of Charlton. I must admit that I had tended to neglect their line in favour of DC and Marvel, but there were some series that I really took a liking to -- Nicola Cuti's E-MAN being one of them. Other favourites of mine were Rog 2000, Mauser (which was an E-Man spin-off, anyway) and DOOMSDAY + 1. And it took guts to plow through page upon page of VENGEANCE SQUAD to get to Mauser's feature. Be seeing you, Charlton. Here's to the halcyon days...

Looking around, the other "biggies" aren't in exactly the best of health. But with some of the top-level decisions being made, I'm not really surprised. Take Marvel's virtual annihilation of its SF line, for instance. How could they possibly consider swapping such greats as Deathlok, Killraven and Warlock for Midas the Million Dollar Mouse & Super Rabbit? Ducks yes, as long as Steve Gerber's around, but Mice and Rabbits? Geeeez, it's enough to make a grown fan cry.

Still, I suppose we do have Marvel to thank for CAPTAIN BRITAIN (or blame, depending on your view of the Claremont/Trimpe strip). Your complaints about it being the most expensive series in the UK, however, were not entirely well-founded. The good Captain may be the only non-reprint strip in the mag, but this makes it the ONLY original strip in Britain. Would you thus consider the whole UK line pretty worthless? And what about the Treasury mags? I already had all the material in the FF issue when it came out about two issues back, but I still grabbed a copy because of my love for the series, a love which should come out in my FF article due to appear in CU someday soon. The only part I'm not too keen on is the tying-in which is due to go between the UK and US strips. Somehow, I've got a feeling that it might get rather complicated, with the UK running about 2 years behind in every strip but Cap Britain.

Before I finish, may I say that ASTRON, a new fanzine I'm working on (see CU37 for details) has been delayed. Some of the articles planned for it will probably turn up in CU, GALAXY-Z, or even Bem.

-Steven J. Green.

I only said that "for a fan who already has the reprints" it was an expensive way to buy new Marvel material, Steven; that doesn't apply to most prospective weekly comic buyers. I hope Captain Britain has a long and happy career!

Dear Martin,

I've just received Bem-11. I like the articles, but find the lettercol a little heavy! I don't seem to understand what most people are on about.

I'm thinking of starting a fanzine of my own sometime in the next ten years or so, and need the services of a good artist who'll work for free! Any ideas? If you could ask anyone who'd be interested in writing to me I'd be grateful.

-Mike Grace, Oban, Rosemary Lane, Charlwood, Horley, Surrey RH6 0DG

Okay, fan artists--your big chance! Tell Mike that Comic Media sent you, that'll confuse him.

Dear Martin,

Thanks for Bemusing 11. The logo was great, Christophe Ta-Min is a good artist and Brian Bolland is fantastic! Captain Nuts has gone bad, I was enjoying it but this part was a let-down. "The Lady is Lethal" was very good.

Talking about Sword & Sorcery, I'm bringing out a new fanzine called "Creation", 8 pages, stencil, A5, for 5p + 6½p postage.

-Joe Matthews.

Sounds interesting, Joe--don't forget to send us a copy, so that we can review it in Bem! And that applies to <u>all</u> fanzines; if we don't see it, we can't plug it, right?

Well, that finishes 4 pages of letters, one of them definitely understandable by Mike Grace (heh, heh). Too many? Too few? Write and tell us, okay? Or write about anything you think our Vast Reading Public would be interested in perusing -- after all, a published letter gets you a free copy of the issue of Bem it's in...

FAN-THINGS

Since Bem's editorial offices have moved to the merry midlands, let's add to the list of comics shops I gave last time a dynamic duo of Birmingham shops -- ANDROMEDA, with a large SF section and comics old and new, reside at 57, Summer Row, while Phil Clarke's new NOSTALGIA & COMICS emporium is at 1 Hurst Street, on the corner of Smallbrook Queensway; anyone who has bought import and advance comics from his Mart tables for only 10p each will need no further recommendation. With two complimentary shops both in the city centre, Brum has to be a good place for a fan to visit--better, perhaps, than London? Like London, Liverpool and Manchester, England's second city now has its own series of Comic Marts, the next one scheduled for 23rd April at the Birmingham Centre Hotel, in New Street, very close to New Street station.

On the subject of Marts, London's series are temporarily back on Saturdays for March 26th & May 14th, at the Old Town Hall, Kings Road, Chelsea, on the corner of Chelsea Manor St. Where the July 31st and September 18th Marts are to be held, Nick Landau isn't saying yet! Also of interest to London-based fans is Nick's new idea of a monthly informal get-together of people interested in comics, to be held at a pub at the Oxford Street end of Wardour Street, "Crackers", on the first Friday of each and every month. Meet people like Richard Burton, Hunter Tremayne, and Mike Conray! If there <u>are</u> actually any people like them, that is...

YANCY STREET JOURNAL ≠2 is out now, for 40p from Howard Stangroom & Boss

; only a two-colour cover this time, but 4 extra pages for no extra charge! A regular, slick fanzine featuring an excellent selection of strips, articles and features is something UK fandom has needed for some time now; with YSJ, we've got it!

COMIC MEDIA NEWS, of course, is a must for all followers of the regular game of "musical credits" and DC and Marvel new projects; lots of cover repros always, and in ≠29 a cover by Brian Bolland, an interview with Jenette Kahn, a report that, apparently, Captain Britain's sales are slipping badly, and this year's CMN-Emlock Awards (not, these days, to be construed as Martin's choices; since when was Howard the Duck a superhero?). 27p will get you a copy, from Richard Burton, 22 Woodhaw, Egham, Surrey TW20 9AP--I think I'll give up sending him my reviews, he never seems to use 'em...

Instead I think I will send a review or two to Alan Austin's main monthly zine --if you've not guessed I'm talking about good old COMICS UNLIMITED, go to the bottom of the form! ≠43 may have been delayed, due mainly to the printer taking two weeks longer than usual on the previous issue, and <u>then</u> shuffling a pair of pages around, but ≠42, with a typically good Alan Hunter cover, will do to be going on with. The article on Conan continues, Nige Edwards reviews fanzines in a way I'm certainly not about to imitate--add "Baragrin" episode 6 by Breque & Marcel, comics news, Emlock, "We Want Information". Paul Jay, and this & that, and you've got a good reason to lash out £1.40 for six issues.

Just out from the same address is DC INDEX VOLUME 2, 84 pages of details on the DC superhero features from Jimmy Olsen to Zatanna, including a brief biography of each character. Which issues of Metamorpho did Joe Orlando pencil? Which issues of Spectre did Neal Adams pencil, ink, and script? In which issue of Superman did Steve Lombard debut? I could browse through this for hours! 65 pence is the price--if you've got Volume One, you'll snap it up right away, and if you haven't, you will just have to stump up £1.05 for the pair.

But, on to the curious case of the pirated fanzine. Last autumn, Nige Edwards, Jack Straw and friends put together WEIRD TRASH ≠4, and sent it, complete and ready to print, to Al Matheson, who was to publish it as part of the next issue of COMICS PLUS. It was a spoof of "Comic Fandom Bulletin", as issue 3 had been of Bemusing and issue 2 of CMN. However, for some reason Al decided not to use it -- instead of returning it to Nige & Jack, he sent it on to George Barnett of PANELOLOGIST. Now, without the permission ,or even knowledge of Nige and Jack, George proceeded to cannibalise their creation; gone were explanations & editorials, indeed any reference to Comic Fandom Bulletin, which made the inclusion of a couple of spoofs of columns from CFB rather puzzling in what

looked superficially like a spoof of Panny. In came art from the Panelologist files, and of course George's neat layouts. But the worst thing of all is that the 2 pages George filled this way were published as "Weird Trash ≠4"--or was the fact that the first Nige knew of this was somebody mentioning in passing in a letter that he had some contributions in the latest (≠7) Panelologist worse? Now, I'm sure George had only the best intentions in using the stuff (much in the way he has in the past used contributions by Nige, Jack, and Pete April in Panny), but in practise his actions were completely unethical--what would he think if Martin say got hold of an unpublished article or two by him, and immediately edited them into a fanzine that he put out as PANELOLOGIST ≠8?

But, back to reviews. WARK ≠8 30p from Rosemary Pardoe, wended its way into the Bem offices, and thence to me; it's in a format similar to Fantasy Trader, but this is a fanzine about fanzines. The lead article is entitled "How Not To Do It", and is by George Barnett (so why didn't Ms Pardoe call her zine Panelologist ≠8?), giving us the low-down on the hopes and pretentions behind TBS ≠1; Mike Ashley tells of his (SF) fannish progress; the editor reviews fantasy fanzines; Mike Grace gives an excellent introduction to the comics fanzines, including YSJ, Bem, CMN, FA, Crom, THA, Penny, and Thing; and there's a four-page lettercol. Though the amount of material that would interest a comics fan will vary from one issue to the next, this is certainly a zine I can recommend.

Staying in the same format, here's GALAXY-Z ≠1 21½p from Phil Hartley,

--quite a promising zine I think. Already Phil has netted Alan Hunter, who provided a most atmospheric cover plus a couple of interior illos, while Joe Matthews is a name Bem readers will know -- he did the illo to the side of my logo this time, yet! G-Z's emphasis is on strips, which makes quite a refreshing change, and while ≠1 has many of the faults all first issues have, it's a zine worth watching. The main thing to aim for when publishing a fanzine is a regular schedule; if Phil keeps 'em coming, all will be well...

Brief note: THE HEROINE ADDICT and companion zine THE ADVENTURESS are not being published at the moment, while the editorial chores are passed from Al Tanner to Steve Johnson and Ted Delorme; I should wait until they reappear before you decide to join the CHFC.

Back in Bem-10, I reported that COMICS PLUS ≠3 would be out in September, with 100 pages; well, it finally arrived in November, 66 pages short. Al Matheson's interests seem to be in the process of shifting away from US comics, so CP is becoming more like the late "New Cartoon Review", which it now incorporates. ≠4 is due out just about now, and, Al says, will be all litho, with the trend towards underground/alternative comics continuing. A small but logical title change will make it COMIX PLUS--30p from Al.

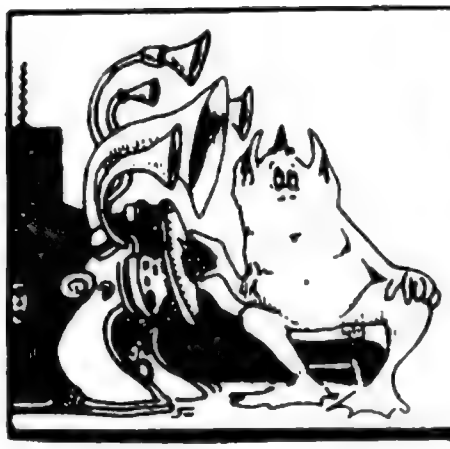
FA ≠60 came out last summer, followed at Christmas-time by FA ≠59, delayed because ex-editor Dez Skinn had hoped to publish it himself--but he has now bowed out of fan publishing & dealing entirely. So, this is the second Colin Campbell-edited issue of FA, with a 5-page instalment of "Swordspell", the last 2 pages of "Horatius", a lettercol, and Richard Burton interviewing Archie Goodwin --I gather FA ≠61 will be out in February, with Mike Cruden interviewing Martin Lock about Bem and his attitudes to comics and reviewing--but with any luck that won't be the main feature. Our Effervescent Editor has to explain why Bem isn't slicker & thicker, not to mention deeper, in the first of a series of Cruden enquiries about UK fanzines. Mike would have started with YSJ, but Howard Stangroom had the sense to stay clear of the Cruden tape recorder! Reserve your copy of Fantasy Advertiser now--it's 40p from Colin Campbell,

or a 4-issue sub for £1.50.

Mention of Meritorious Mike Cruden reminds me to plug his still-current FANTASY TRADER 23; FT has a reputation as the most intelligent & thoughtful comics fanzines around, and lives up to it this time with "Media to Media", in which the progress of comics is compared with the cinema, which early this century had a similar status to comics, but has managed to forge ahead much more over the years. There's a report on a trip to the USA by Alan Cookson, News, letters, a cover (by Keith Bates) sure to appeal to Nige Edwards (tho' it's Otto von Ripoff who wants to buy the original), and a goodly selection of ads--all for 16½p from M. Cruden.

What more should any fan want?

So, that brings another column to a close; two complete pages, even! If you've got a zine you want reviewed, or just want to drop me a line, you can get in touch with me via Martin --how nice it must be to have a fixed address! See you in Bem-13... -Ed M. Sallis



REVIEW SECTION

SON OF SATAN #8 (February)
"...Dance With the Devil, My Red-Eyed Son" by Bill Mantlo and Russ Heath

Ahhh! It tears at my soul! When I heard that this mag was being cancelled, I reacted with total and absolute apathy. Well, why not, it was a fairly boring mag, wasn't it? So, what happens? The last issue is a masterpiece.

Most fans think that all Russ Heath can draw is Sgt Rock--not true, as here he portrays hell with all the perverse blasphemy that it needs. Mantlo's story is competent and functional but it's Heath's art that gives it the dark atmosphere of Dante's Inferno. Now, why wasn't Russ drawing the mag right from the start? What a pity. It just goes to prove that hell hath no fury like a comic fan scorned... -NPE

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY #3 (February)
"Marak" by Jack Kirby & Mike Royer

The film was called the ultimate trip; the comic will ultimately trip and fall flat on its face -- the whole kosmos echoing with the sound. Let's forget about the art (with a few exceptions, it's highly forgettable) and concentrate on the story.

Kirby strikes me as a man with nothing to say; so he talks too much. The first 2 stories just went around in circles -- the third, part one of a two-parter, is leading nowhere. With total disregard for history, facts, or even verisimilitude, Kirby bounces along from the stone age to the bronze age, discovering the wheel (a distressed biscuit tin) on the way. You work it out. -Richard Ashford

ACTION COMICS #464 (October)
"Superman, I'm Going to Re-Run Your Life" by Bates, Swan & Blaisdell; "See Metropolis With Clark Kent" by Bridwell & Schaffenberger

Here's the first part of a story involving what seem to be youthful doppelgangers of the Flash and Batman, with a mystery villain on the final page to boot. The "Private Life of Clark Kent" story has a typical E. Nelson Bridwell script, with artwork from a man who has to be one of the cleanest pencillers in the business, Kurt Schaffenberger. -Jan Garczynski

KOBRA #5 (December)
"The Eye of the Serpent"
by Pasko, Buckler, & McLaughlin

The main thing about this strip that appeals to me is the way that existing minor DC characters are being woven into the story; first Randu Singh, companion of a certain soon-to-be-revived (if I remember rightly) hero-type; and then Mrs Double's boy Jonathan, no less... It's a shame the mag's going to be dropped (though hardly all that surprising really), but at least these links to other parts of the DC universe bode well for future guest appearances elsewhere. You never know, Kobra might end up as DC's answer to Doc Doom after all... -KW

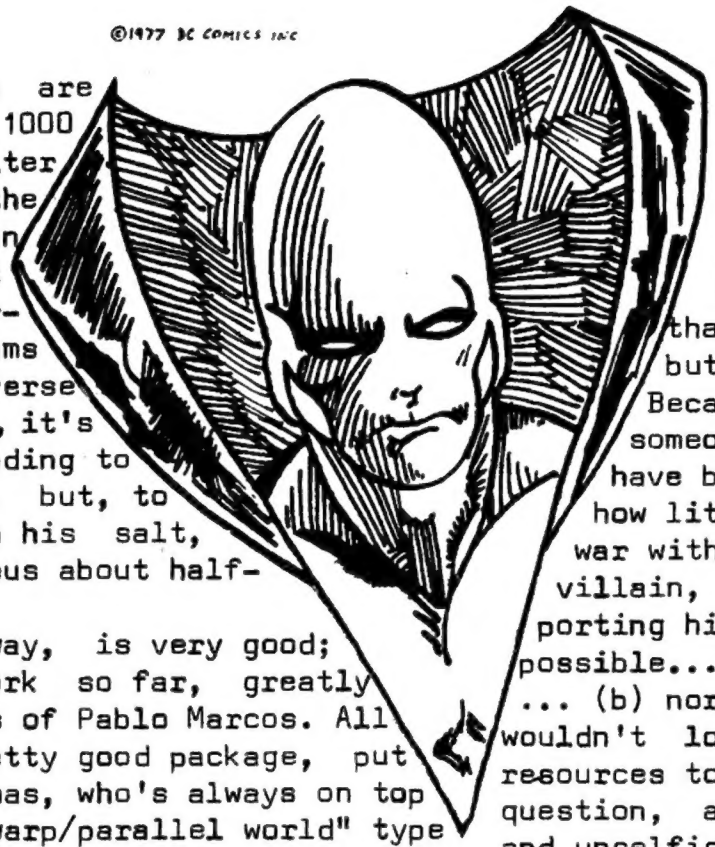
HULK #208 (February)
"A Monster In Our Midst" by Len Wein, Sal Buscema, & Joe Staton

In memoriam to Jarella, no more funny/silly Hulk reviews from me; perhaps I sometimes get too involved in a comic (I still brood about Lady Dorma, and the Swordsman) but I didn't want to see Jarella go the way of all flesh. I knew it was bound to happen, it's an unwritten law in comics that if the girls get too close it usually ends in their deaths, but I had my fingers crossed for her.

Life goes on for the Hulk's mag, though, with the introduction of the Absorbing Man and some last page villains. I suppose everybody will disagree with me, but I think Len has brought this comic back into a quality bracket. ((No, rubbish! -the readers)) Ah, shuddup! I don't care--I like you, Hulk, you're my kinda guy.
-Nige Edwards

WHAT IF #1 (February)
"What If Spider-Man Had Joined the Fantastic Four?" by Thomas, Craig, & Marcos

Out of the choice of comics for me to review for Bem, this one just had to be high on the list. After all, it's not every day that Marvel enters the "Imaginary Story" field; but then, have they now? Not to hear editor Thomas talk. No, these will be tales of parallel worlds, with slight differences from the usual Marvel Universe, told by the Watcher himself. The



concepts themselves are interesting, of the 1000 choices that can alter history, etc, but the premise of Spider-Man joining the FF isn't exactly mind-shattering; not when he teams up with so many diverse heroes in Team-Up. No, it's left to the twist ending to supply the surprise, but, to any comic fan worth his salt, this should be obvious about halfway through.

The art, by the way, is very good; Jim Craig's best work so far, greatly enhanced by the inks of Pablo Marcos. All in all, it's a pretty good package, put together by Roy Thomas, who's always on top form with the "timewarp/parallel world" type plots. ((See Avengers Annual ≠2 for confirmation of this -Stan))

I started out ready to loathe this magazine, being an imaginary story-hater from way back, but I ended up quite liking it; still, the novelty could wear off pretty fast. I'm not fully convinced yet that it won't. -NPE

Well, the name of the mag's "What If?"; the title of the lettercol's "Why Not?"; so, I think I might as well give my response in the form of a question, namely, "So What?"...

As far as I can make out, what Roy T's saying in the lettercol is that these are to be imaginary stories, but <u>not</u> 'Imaginary Stories'... Great doublethink, Roy! Marvel's march towards 1984 (see my article in YSJ ≠1) continues...

But, you see, unlike Roy T, I never <u>did</u> care all that much for 'Imaginary Stories'. Oh, there have been some over the years that I've enjoyed--"Superman Red & Superman Blue" springs to mind, and the recent "Superman 2001" -- but I've always felt that on the whole they were fairly pointless, inasmuch as they couldn't <u>go</u> anywhere. You see, it doesn't matter just how intriguing the starting-point of the story is; once the story ends, that's it. In a normal strip, whether or not there's a continuous storyline, you always know that, barring cancellation, when one story finishes another will begin, and the major events and developments in a current story can affect the course of the next; this doesn't apply to 'Imaginary Stories'. Consequently, there's an inevitable sense of anti-climax at the end of the story, because nothing can follow on from it...

Oh, I must say that I found this issue's twist-ending distinctly underwhelming, not to say unlikely.

Apart from that it wasn't too bad... -KW

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT ≠31 (December)
Nick Fury Assignment: "The Infinity Formula" by Jim Starlin (script) & Howard Chaykin

No.

Well, perhaps I ought to qualify that slightly. Yes, I liked the idea; but no, there is no way it could work. Because (a) it is not conceivable that someone in Colonel Fury's position could have been paying someone off, no matter how little, each and every year since the war without <u>someone</u> (besides this issue's villain, that is) knowing, and either reporting him (not easy of course, but quite possible...cf Watergate) or blackmailing him ... (b) nor is it conceivable that Nick Fury wouldn't long ago have used SHIELD's vast resources to locate and secure the formula in question, and thus for reasons both selfish and unselfish remove the hold over him--no.

Still... It was a nice idea. -K. Williams

TARZAN THE UNTAMED ≠254 (October)
"Vengeance And Mercy" by Gerry Conway, Dave Kraft, J.L. Garcia Lopez, & Frank Springer

Tarzan has never been so good!

If you've been following the monthly adaptation of the Burroughs story, you'll have noticed that each issue features a change in artists; this issue's no exception, as Frank Springer takes over the inking. It doesn't make for all that fantastic an art job, but it's competent enough, and a damn sight better story-wise than Kubert. -Jan Garczynski

TARZAN OF THE APES ≠257 (January)
"The Nightmare" by Joe Kubert

Well, except to say that this is a reprint from ≠214, missing the original page 14, and it's an ironic note to end on, the title maybe refering to DC's sales on this comic, there's not much to add, so I'll take this opportunity to say a few words about DC's handling of the immortal apeman, and of Marvel's takeover.

It's also strange that the first few and the last few of DC's Tarzan were the best, with Joe Kubert's middle stuff interesting but without much bite. Odd as well that Tarzan is one of those characters with so much promise and potential, like Superman, but it hardly ever seems to be used.

I can't really believe that Marvel will do any better; their Tarzan look-alike, Ka-Zar, has just been cancelled, which isn't by any means a promising sign.

I could be wrong, and I'd like to be proven so, but I see Tarzan as one of those features where we'll have to dream of what could be, and not what is... -Nigel P. Edwards

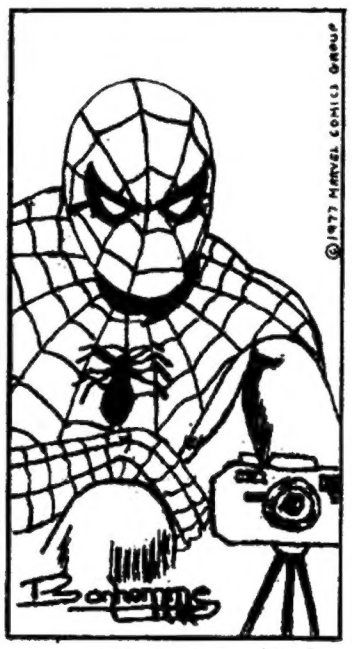
TALE-ENDERS

BLACK LIGHTNING #1 (April)
by Isabella, von Eeden & Springer

At last, DC's new black superhero, created by Tony Isabella, makes his debut, in what a DC wag has dubbed a "thunderous" origin issue. Jefferson Pierce, Olympic decathlon star, has returned to the high school he graduated from, to be a teacher -- only to come up against the drug pushers of the 100. The first round is theirs; so that they can't strike back at his pupils & friends, he dons a costume, and calls himself Black Lightning.

A solid superhero book, then, in a realistic setting--well worth following. -Ruan Lanihorne

BLACK PANTHER #1 (Jan)
"King Solomon's Frog" by
Jack Kirby & Mike Royer



You may be surprised, as I was, to read on the text page Jack Kirby saying he <u>likes</u> the Panther. My response to that, and I don't think I'll be alone, is if he <u>really</u> liked BP, why did he kill him off, and put this character in his place? On the other hand, mind you, if you don't mind having a completely different man shoved into the hero's long-johns (so to speak), then you could well enjoy the story, which does have some intriguing elements to it, even if the cute-names syndrome does get on one's nerves.

You just have to weigh up in your own mind whether it was worth sacrificing the (true) Black Panther for... -K. Williams

WORLD'S FINEST #241 (October)
"Make Way for a New World" by Bob
Haney, Pablo Marcos & John Calnan

Here I am, reviewing the comic no one else will touch, and quite rightly too. More Haney grot has a family heading for space, with some others, because they think Earth has died--and then they find it was all a test by a doctor.

Even with Marcos art the "World's Finest Team" falls flat on its face. -Jan Garczynski

LOGAN'S RUN #2 (February)
"Cathedral Kill" by Kraft, Perez & Jansen

A change of writer and editor, but the same old Logan, with the same old problems. The story continues getting all the space possible out of a constricting 17-page format. Not a precise adaptation--each story is a good self-contained comic-book. It would be impossible to do a completely faithful adaptation--not as ridiculous, though, as Kirby's attempt? -RA

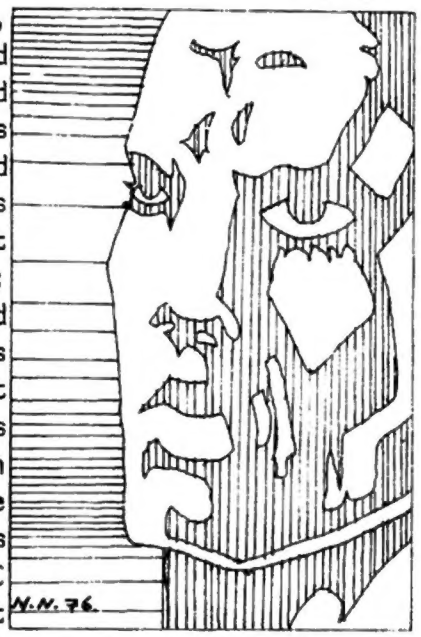
Goodbye, DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU; that you managed to last for 33 issues, when the flood of Kung Fu movies had long subsided to a mere trickle, shows what Marvel can do when they put their minds to it. Roy Thomas, Marv Wolfman, Tony Isabella, Don McGregor, Archie Goodwin, & John Warner had edited it; Shang-Chi and Sons of the Tiger were the regular features at the start, although the "Master of Kung Fu" was supplanted by Iron Fist on occasion. Shang-Chi has the front feature this last time, however, written by his regular scripter, Doug Moench, and drawn by the artist perhaps most associated with this magazine, Rudy Nebres. More exciting is the second comics feature, by Iron Fist's Chris Claremont, along with Marshall Rogers, who is certainly becoming a very competent artist -- the concluding half of "Daughters of the Dragon", alias Colleen Wing & Misty Knight. "Leave 'em wanting more" is an old show-biz motto; Marvel have succeeded in that here.

One can, however, take such a saying rather too seriously; witness MARVEL PREVIEW #9, by Roy Thomas, Rich Buckler & Tony DeZuniga; it features "Man-God", an adaptation of Philip Wylie's 1930 novel "Gladiator"--or, rather, an adaptation of the first half of that book. If we want to read the <u>second</u> half, page 55 asks us to write and let them know. Why not devote two consecutive issues of Preview to "Man-God", as was done with Sherlock Holmes?

With Marvel, you get about 50 pages of black & white comics for your dollar; DC's new idea is to give about 64 pages of colour comics for the same money, which seems a good idea to me. The most interesting of the four books that have been changed to this all-new format (the others are Superman Family, House of Mystery, & G.I. Combat) is WORLD'S FINEST (#244), which, since Murray Boltinoff and the Super-Sons came on the scene with #215, has been just about the poorest DC superhero title. But now, with Joe Orlando & Denny O'Neil handling the editorial chores, and 63/64 pages to play with, how can we lose? Green Arrow, squeezed out of WF after #140, was a natural choice; going on Golden Age performance, Black Canary should be in an 80-page FLASH, Vigilante in ACTION, Wonder Woman in SENSATION (that that title stopped in 1953 is a minor detail I trust Ms Kahn can see to), and Superman and Batman in SEPARATE STORIES (please?)... Just do those little things, DC, and I'll be very happy.

"DC's Dollar Comics give you nearly 4 regular comics for the price of 3", is DC's boast; by my calculations, it's equivalent to the return of 19-page stories to 30c comics, leaving out the fact that you've only got one front cover illo (which, when Adams is doing them, is no small consideration)--in fact, slightly better value can be found in the 50c comics, which average 33 pages of new material, which would take us back to the days of 20 pages of new comics--ah, those were the days! 17 pages for a story is very constricting, so I hope both $1.00 and 50c formats succeed.

And a good argument for a thicker format is JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #141--with 33 pages to work with each month, both Steve Englehart and the JLA have never had it so good. The cover is by Rich Buckler (inked by Springer), and is as poor and scrappy as most of his recent dc covers; inside, Dick Dillin and Frank McLaughlin are as usual the art team. But it's Englehart, who has been given his head on this book, who is the star performer--this is a type of book that DC has long lacked, and it looks as if Marvel will come to regret the way Steve Englehart was treated during his last months there, if that was what caused him to cross the (not-so) great divide...



At one time, CRAZY's claim to be "The Magazine That Dares to be Dumb" was humorous; it had a personality of its own, with a certain link to Marvel proper, and I remember describing it as a cross between MAD and NATIONAL LAMPOON. At one time Howard the Duck was expected to get a strip in it, following his successful debut in MAN-THING; can you imagine anything similar being thought of now, in what has become a poor man's CRACKED or SICK? #24 has a spoof of the "Charlie's Angels" TV show, and marginal jokes such as "Behind every great woman there's a great behind". That's a joke? Only marginally!

WEIRD WESTERN TALES #39 has the debut of THE SAVAGE, by Mike Fleisher, Dick Ayers & George Evans--or it would have been, if DC hadn't been reminded that Condé Nast, copyright holders on a doctor by that name, wouldn't have looked at all fondly on such a title (surely Joe Orlando or somebody would have remembered the trouble Gil Kane got into with HIS NAME IS SAVAGE?), so the feature is now called "Scalphunter"--a more limiting image, surely. The idea "white man raised by Indians" is hardly new, in fact if Seaboard/Atlas used it ("Comanche Kid" in WESTERN ACTION #1) it must be ancient. But let us never underestimate Mike Fleisher, or Sergio Aragones & Joe Orlando, who created both this new character and the excellent Bat Lash; the Scalphunter is Brian Savage, son of the old DC hero Matt Savage, Trail Boss, which gives a certain sense of continuity, and Brian Savage has the ruthless strength such a character does need. But, to me he doesn't seem as dynamic or mythic a figure as the lone bounty hunter who comes out of nowhere, and vanishes into legend -- and Jonah Hex has come perilously close to cancelation on more than one occasion.

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT finishes with #33, which focuses on Deathlok, by Dave Kraft (writer) and Buckler, Nasser, (Arv) Jones & Janson, taking up the story of the cyborg where ASTONISHING TALES #36 left off. And welcome into the Marvel Universe Devil Slayer, previously called Demon Hunter. Flash-backs to his previous appearance are shown; all that's needed is the footnote "See DEMON HUNTER #1, published by Seaboard/Atlas -Archie". It's nice to see Deathlok back in action; while shifting him to 1977 is sure to lessen his unique appeal, it will mean that he doesn't disappear completely, as it won't need Doc Doom's time-machine to team him up with another hero--how often, after all, does Phantom Eagle, stuck 50 years in the past, get into view?

At the recent London and Birmingham Marts, I've been selling new imports; the piles of all the comics that World Distributors don't bring in any more look pretty impressive, with RED SONJA, DR STRANGE, INHUMANS, SPIDER-MAN, KULL, CAPTAIN MARVEL, HULK, PREMIERE, and others, but one title sells better than any of them -- and that's X-MEN. Unfortunately, the Vast Reading Public isn't as clued-in as Mart-goers, and Professor Xavier's gifted pupils aren't a sales success; but as long as this allows Claremont & Cockrum two months to polish each issue, that isn't disastrous. #104 is as good as ever, and certainly is a comic worth import prices. In the absence of Cyclops, it's Banshee who takes the lead--but with the return of Magneto, who else would want the job? What is the master plan of Havok, Polaris, and Eric the Red? Who is "Mutant X"? Who refers to Wolverine as a trifle on the short side this time? We've got a fine blend of action and characterisation, mystery and humour, art and story, Cockrum and Claremont--a winner, in fact. But why isn't it a sales success? I wish I knew.

And no, I'm not short of comics to review, this time around -- but it makes a change from the all-too-often frantic pace of the Emlock family of columns, and persuading the editor to let me slow down wasn't all that difficult, really. After all, I'm not without influence around here, you know... -Martin Lock

MADE IN BRITAIN

The UK comics scene is brighter now than it has ever been--but that isn't saying much. Once you've mentioned HOUSE OF HAMMER, ALLY SLOPER, BRAINSTORM and CAPTAIN BRITAIN, that's about it; but they are quite a promising bunch!

First, the House that Dez built--THE HOUSE OF HAMMER ≠7. The first draft of this column I did quoted extensively from a letter Dez sent out with complimentary copies, but since CMN printed it, there's no need. Dez asks that UK zines should be judged on their own merits, & compared with other UK magazines and comics--well, compared with the average DC Thompson or IPC "product" HoH is a superior magazine. This issue isn't the best so far, but it does have a typically fine cover by Brian Lewis, and the 18 page adaptation ("Twins of Evil") was scripted by Chris Lowder. The only other page of comics is on werewolf lore, by Dave Gibbons -- but I wish "Twins" had been drawn by a UK artist, not Blas Gallego, and that there was a better ratio of comics to articles on old films!

ALLY SLOPER ≠4 is out now, for 20p (or £2.00 for 6 issues by post,

with quick sketches by Jack Kirby and Al Williamson of Ally, and contributions by Hunt Emerson, John Richardson (who draws "Amanda" for the Sun), and Malcolm Poynter. It does not, however, have episode 2 of the Frank Hampson "Dawn O'Dare"--is one page an issue too big a work-load for him now? I hope not.

BRAINSTORM COMIX ≠3, "Mixed Bunch", is just that; Brian Talbot's "The Papist Affair" has some highly accomplished art and an SF plot, while Hunt Emerson's four pages are completely crazy, in the best way, and "Odmund" by Chris Welch & Chris Rowley is well done too. In fact, only "Gary Grease" by Paul Stubbs failed to impress -- three out of four's a good average!

STREETCOMIX ≠2 40p, from Arts Lab Press,

runs quite a spectrum of work, with strips by Kev O'Neill, Tony Schofield, George Szostek, Andy Johnson, & editor Hunt Emerson, plus others, including a couple of jam sessions drawn at KAK last year. The underground comic is alive, and well, and living in Birmingham--I look forward to Hunt E's next publication.

Unfortunately, there isn't room to discuss British Marvel, with emphasis of course on CAPTAIN BRITAIN, this time -- I hope to give them, including the new weekly, full coverage in Bem-13. Let's finish with IPC instead, who have after all been in the business quite a few years now. 2000 A.D. is the title of a new 8p weekly, due out on February 21st. It's to feature SF strips, such as MACH-1 ("His Incredible Hyper-Power will Amaze You"), space-age dinosaurs, a free gift "space spinner" in ≠1...oh yes, and also "the new DAN DARE". Should be interesting!

In the meantime, I have been investigating ACTION -- the January 15th issue had a signed Dave Gibbons cover, while 2 weeks later the "Dredger" figure (except the head) was taken from the samples he took to them. Each issue has eight 3 or 4 page complete stories, or serial instalments, with boxing, spies, motor racing, war, football, sharks, truck-driving secret agents, and a "Rollerball" look-alike; they all end with a plug for next week, and average 8 panels a page, so there's plenty to read. A winning combination! -Ruan Lanihorne

CAPTAIN BRITAIN MEETS CAPTAIN AMERICA!
(A Chris Ash Presentation)

I SUPPOSE YOU WANT MY HELP AGAINST DATSUN, OPEC AND THE IMF AGAIN!
NO...NO! JUST STOP SENDING OVER THOSE THOUSANDS OF U.S. MARVELS EVERY MONTH!